

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CIRILLO, VICE PRESIDENT FOR SYSTEM
OPERATIONS SERVICES, AIR TRAFFIC ORGANIZATION OF THE
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION,
ON REFORMING THE WRIGHT AMENDMENT,
JULY 12, 2006.

Chairman Mica, Congressman Costello, Members of the Subcommittee:

I appear before you today to discuss the unique operational restrictions now in place at Dallas Love Field Airport (Love Field) and whether modifying those restrictions will result in a denigration of air space efficiency in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

As background, the International Air Transportation Competition Act of 1979 contained a legislative provision that has come to be known as the Wright Amendment. In an effort to ensure the success of the newly opened Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport (DFW), former Speaker of the House, Jim Wright, wished to include language in the bill limiting interstate service at Love Field. As a result, the Wright Amendment prohibited non-stop service (and through-ticketing and through-service) between Dallas Love Field and cities other than those in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Oklahoma, subject to an exception for flights with smaller aircraft. The Wright Amendment was subsequently modified to permit additional operations between Love Field and points in Alabama, Mississippi, Kansas, and Missouri.

The FAA has been asked if safety would be affected by permitting additional flights into and out of Love Field. The agency has said consistently and repeatedly what I emphasize today: FAA will never compromise its safety standards to accommodate increased

demand. Our most critical mission is aviation safety, including keeping aircraft safely separated from one another. Consequently, the only question that should be asked from an airspace perspective is whether further modification to or elimination of the Wright Amendment would compromise efficient airspace use in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Based on a recent MITRE study requested by FAA, of airspace operations if the Wright Amendment is repealed, and based on FAA's validation of MITRE's findings, I can tell you FAA does not expect that the efficient use of airspace will be compromised.

Knowing that the debate on the Wright Amendment was ongoing, FAA contacted MITRE and asked them to assess the impact to efficiency of increased operations at both DFW and Love Field. Results of the analysis indicate there is significant additional capacity in the Dallas-Fort Worth terminal space area. While additional operations at these airports will make it more complicated to maintain separation between aircraft, many other regions of this country have airspace that is at least this complex. In each case the potential conflicts are unique to the particular location. Factors such as the number of airports in the region, the number of runways at each airport, how they are situated, and the number and type of operations conducted there are only some of the considerations that dictate how FAA controls traffic in a given region. FAA has great flexibility in using a wide range of technologies and procedures to accommodate the air traffic needs of an area. Some of you may remember that a couple of years ago, the number of operations at Washington Dulles International Airport (Dulles) significantly increased at a time when a new carrier initiated service at the same time airport

construction had closed one runway. FAA was able to implement traffic management initiatives to efficiently accommodate the increase in demand.

Similarly, airspace in the northeast corridor and southern Florida is quite congested, with several major airports in close proximity. In addition, Chairman Mica recently held a field hearing in California to address his concerns that the operational challenges in that region were being met. I cite these examples to demonstrate the nature of our business - that FAA is asked on a daily basis to control traffic and maximize airspace efficiency in a highly changeable environment characterized by congested routes, dynamic traffic and volatile weather. Yet, by tailoring our resources to the unique demands of each situation, we have been able to do what we are asked, safely and effectively.

MITRE's study assumed a range of operational increases. Their conclusion, which FAA has validated, is that it would take hundreds of additional daily operations at both airports for there to be reportable volume-related delays. It would take hundreds of more daily flights on top of that to result in what FAA would consider to be significant delays. It should be noted that their study did not factor delays that would be attributable to weather. While MITRE's study was based on unconstrained operations at Love Field, actual operations under the agreement reached by the parties would in fact be somewhat constrained by a limit on the number of gates that could be used. Given this limitation, and MITRE's finding of no significant effect even in unconstrained conditions, we are confident that the operational increases that would result from the proposed modification

to the Wright Amendment would not result in efficiency problems for the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, or the National Airspace System (NAS).

Even if operations in the area increase beyond what FAA anticipates, we have options to handle a significant increase in flights if necessary. Last month, Russ Chew testified before you about some of the notable successes of the Air Traffic Organization (ATO), one of which was Area Navigation (RNAV). RNAV procedures provide flight path guidance that is incorporated into onboard aircraft avionics systems, requiring only minimal air traffic instructions. This technology significantly reduces routine controller-pilot communications, allowing more time on frequency for pilots and controllers to handle other safety-critical flight activities. Also, RNAV procedures use more precise routes for take-offs and landings, reducing fuel burn and time intervals between aircraft on the runways. This creates increased air traffic efficiency, enhances safety, and may allow some increase in air traffic through put. We currently have RNAV procedures in place for DFW, but not for Love Field. So establishing RNAV for Love Field is one option available to us should air traffic demand increase substantially. Should the need arise, we would also look at modifying flows and sector configurations on a larger scale.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that FAA's commitment to safety means that we would never consider sacrificing accepted safety standards for the sake of efficiency or anything else. If Congress decides to modify the existing unique restrictions at Love Field and impose other unique restrictions there, FAA will continue to safely separate aircraft regardless of the operational impact of the legislation. But having looked at the

anticipated impacts of what we know is under consideration, we have no reason to believe system efficiency will be compromised.

This concludes my prepared statement. I will be happy to answer your questions at this time.